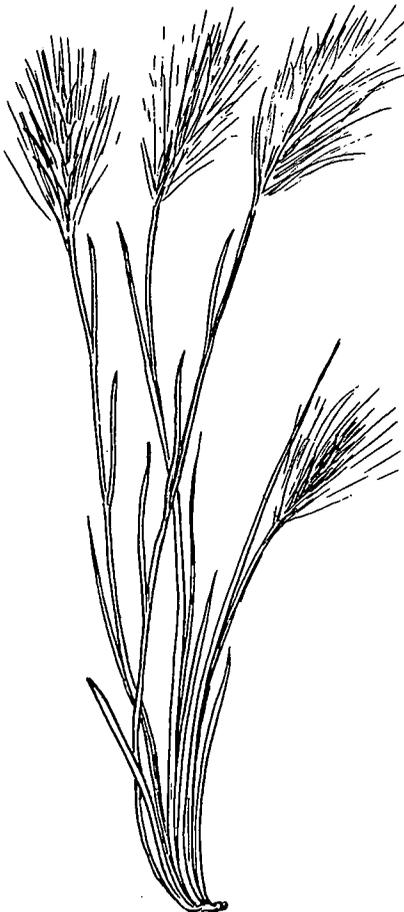


Foxtail Barley

(*Hordeum jubatum*)

Where does it grow? This plant, usually called "foxtail," is common in eastern Oregon hay fields. It loves to sneak into vacant places in alfalfa fields. It is salt or alkali tolerant so sometimes grows in almost pure stands on alkali flats.

Is it important? All those who handle hay and get its sharp pointed grains in their woolen underwear would say it is. It is excellent feed when young, but it ripens before alfalfa is ready and it pretty nearly ruins the hay. Ripe foxtail and ripe cheatgrass are the twin villains in the eastern Oregon hay drama. It works into the tissues at the base of the animal's tongue, causes swellings and sores, and may keep an animal from eating.



What does it look like? Under favorable conditions, when growth is rank, the heads just before maturity are a beautiful lavender color. Then heads cling together in a graceful, nodding plume. As the seeds ripen, the heads spread wider and turn straw color. As the grains drop off, the heads break up entirely, leaving nothing but the stems. It is a bunchgrass with many heads to a plant.

◀ Foxtail barley grows in hay fields and ruins the quality of hay (1/4 x).

Description:

Length of life--Perennial, long lived.

Height--Usually about a foot, seldom over two feet, except in alfalfa fields where it may stretch up to see what's going on.

Leaves--Mostly from the base, long, tapering to sharp tips.

Heads--Usually 3 to 4 inches long, with straight beards that feel soft until ripe. Note the word "straight." Other similar plants have twisted, curled, or bent beards.

Method of spread--By grains that stick in clothing and in hair of animals. Very heavy seeder. Indians used the seeds for food.

Foxtail will come into alfalfa if it can find a vacant space.

Does it look like anything else? It resembles bottle brush squirrel-tail, but the beards of the latter are bent almost at right angles when ripe, while the beards of foxtail merely flare out.

